

Dear U.S. Congress,

My name is Shin DongHyuk. On November 11<sup>th</sup> Of 1982 I was born in a North Korean political prison camp. From the moment I opened my eyes the first thing I saw was uniformed guards and prisoners who obeyed these guards. This was all I knew. I never even questioned why I was born (and likely had to die) in this camp and under those circumstances. As young innocent children who know nothing more than what we are taught, the first things we learn are that our parents are traitors, or have committed grave crimes against the State. We are in this camp because of that and should be grateful that our lives are spared therefore must work hard if we want to live. We weren't allowed to do a single thing on our own. We ate the food the guards gave us and did the work they ordered us to do. If we were inadequate in any way, we would be beaten or starved but this was the normal way of life inside of the camp. We prisoners never expressed or even knew the concepts of freedom, happiness, or love.. My earliest memory is when I was around 5, at what I eventually discovered was a public execution. I so clearly remember the loud sound of the gun that frightened me to my core. I was never aware of the meaning or importance of family. We merely addressed our parents as "mom" and "dad" without having any sense of affection or closeness. I was taught by the guards to inform on anyone (including family members) at any time for any infraction. After an incident of reporting on my mother and brother, the despicable guards created a situation which ultimately resulted in the horrendous execution of both them. Any prisoner can get beat or executed if the guards have a particular dislike toward them all the while not feeling a single bit of remorse. At one point, I was punished and hung upside down with chains as they burned my backside with fire. I was also tortured in unimaginable ways including my fingernails being ripped off and eventually losing part of my finger.... The DPRK creates animals, monsters.

After a decade, my body still bears scars from the excruciating pain I endured. Although we prisoners were breathing, we were all living lives of torment in a place that can only be comparable to hell. At this very moment, there are countless other people enduring the same agony that I did. Today an innocent baby could be born and will experience the same beatings, starvation, and executions. It's hard for me to think about. But what's even more difficult to think about is the sad reality of the fact that there is not one person or Country who can help save these suffering souls. If anything, for 70 years this severe human rights crisis seems to have been ignored for the most part. But I still have hope. I have hope in The strong and powerful United States Of America whose nation values freedom, liberty, and basic human rights. I believe in this nation, it's government, and people. I believe that there is still a chance to do something and that something is always better than nothing, which is why I refuse to give up. Hundreds of thousands of prisoners are suffering and living inexplicably painful lives in these camps because of one evil dictatorship but I still have hope in Mr. Conaway's and Mr. Connolly's resolution. My people need a voice, they need action.

You all know the meanings of love, happiness, and freedom and I strongly believe that with your help these gulags can one day be shut down once and for all.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for anything you can do on behalf of those suffering.

Sincerely,  
DongHyuk Shin

Shin DongHyuk

3/01/18